

SCRIPTIVE SKETCHES.

IN VERSE.

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TAKEN DURING A

PEDESTRIAN TOUR

IN THE

ITALIAN, GRISON, SWISS, AND SAVOYARD

ALPS.

BY

W. WORDSWORTH, B. A.

OF ST. JOHN'S, CAMBRIDGE.

—Loca pastorum deserta atque otia dia.

Castella in tumulis—

LUGRET.

—Et longe saltus lateque vacantes.

VIRGIL.

London

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E R R A T A.

Page 1, Line 4, for !, substitute a ;
8, Line last, for fane, read fane
10, Line 8 from top, for wane, read wain
15, Line 5 from bottom *put the dash — after Hermit instead of before*
15, Bottom line, for mid towers, read mid dim towers
22, Line 7 from bottom, for beach read beech.

TO
THE REV. ROBERT JONES,
FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

DEAR SIR,

HOWEVER desirous I might have been of giving you proofs of the high place you hold in my esteem, I should have been cautious of wounding your delicacy by thus publicly addressing you, had not the circumstance of my having accompanied you amongst the Alps, seemed to give this dedication a propriety sufficient to do away any scruples which your modesty might otherwise have suggested.

In inscribing this little work to you I consult my heart. You know well how great is the difference between two companions lolling in a post chaise, and two travellers plodding slowly along the road, side by side, each with his little knapsack of necessaries upon his shoulders. How much more of heart between the two latter !

I am happy in being conscious I shall have one reader who will approach the conclusion of these few pages with regret. You they must certainly interest, in reminding you of moments to which you can hardly look back without a pleasure not the less dear from a shade of melancholy. You will meet with few images without recollecting the spot where we observed them together, consequently, whatever is feeble in my design, or spiritless in my colouring, will be amply supplied by your own memory.

B

With

DEDICATION.

With still greater propriety I might have inscribed to you a description of some of the features of your native mountains, through which we have wandered together, in the same manner, with so much pleasure. But the sea-sunsets which give such splendour to the vale of Clwyd, Snowdon, the chair of Idris, the quiet village of Bethkelert, Menai and her druids, the Alpine steeps of the Conway, and the still more interesting windings of the wizard stream of the Dee remain yet untouched. Apprehensive that my pencil may never be exercised on these subjects, I cannot let slip this opportunity of thus publicly assuring you with how much affection and esteem,

I am Dear Sir,

Your most obedient very humble Servant.

W. WORDSWORTH.

ARGUMENT.

Happiness (if she had been to be found on Earth) amongst the Charms of Nature—Pleasures of the pedestrian Traveller—Author crosses France to the Alps—Present State of the Grande Chartreuse—Lake of Como—Time, Sunset—Same Scene, Twilight—Same Scene, Morning, it's Voluptuous Character; Old Man and Forest Cottage Music—River Tusa—Via Mala and Grison Gypsey. Valley of Sckellenen-thal—Lake of Uri. Stormy Sunset—Chapel of William Tell—force of Local Emotion—Chamois Chaser—View of the higher Alps—Manner of Life of a Swiss Mountaineer interspersed with views of the higher Alps—Golden Age of the Alps—Life and Views continued—Ranz des Vaches famous Swiss Air---Abbey of Einsiedlen and it's Pilgrims---Valley of Chamouny---Mont Blanc---Slavery of Savoy---Influence of Liberty on Cottage Happiness---France---Wish for the extirpation of Slavery---Conclusion.

EVII

DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES.

WERE there, below, a spot of holy ground,
By Pain and her sad family unfound,
Sure, Nature's God that spot to man had giv'n,
Where murmuring rivers join the song of ev'n !
Where falls the purple morning far and wide
In flakes of light upon the mountain-side ;
Where summer Suns in ocean sink to rest,
Or moonlight Upland lifts her hoary breast ;
Where Silence, on her night of wing, o'er-broods
Unfathom'd dells and undiscover'd woods ;
Where rocks and groves the power of waters shakes
In cataracts, or sleeps in quiet lakes.

But

But doubly pitying Nature loves to show'r
Soft on his wounded heart her healing pow'r,
Who plods o'er hills and vales his road forlorn,
Wooing her varying charms from eve to morn.
No sad vacuities his heart annoy,
Blows not a Zephyr but it whispers joy ;
For him lost flowers their idle sweets exhale ;
He tastes the meanest note that swells the gale ;
For him sod-seats the cottage-door adorn,
And peeps the far-off spire, his evening bourn !
Dear is the forest frowning o'er his head,
And dear the green-fward to his velvet tread ;
Moves there a cloud o'er mid-day's flaming eye ?
Upward he looks—and calls it luxury ;
Kind Nature's charities his steps attend,
In every babbling brook he finds a friend,
While chaft'ning thoughts of sweetest use, bestow'd
By Wisdom, moralize his pensive road.

Host of his welcome inn, the noon-tide bow'r,
 To his spare meal he calls the passing poor ;
 He views the Sun uprear his golden fire,
 Or sink, with heart alive like *Memnon's lyre ;
 Blesses the Moon that comes with kindest ray
 To light him shaken by his viewless way.
 With bashful fear no cottage children steal
 From him, a brother at the cottage meal,
 His humble looks no shy restraint impart,
 Around him plays at will the virgin heart.
 While unsuspended wheels the village dance,
 The maidens eye him with inquiring glance,
 Much wondering what sad stroke of crazing Care
 Or desperate Love could lead a wanderer there:
 Me, lur'd by hope her sorrows to remove,
 A heart, that could not much itself approve,

* The lyre of Memnon is reported to have emitted melancholy or cheerful tones, as it was touched by the sun's evening or morning rays.

O'er

O'er Gallia's wastes of corn dejected led,
 †Her road elms rustling thin above my head,
 Or through her truant pathway's native charms,
 By secret villages and lonely farms,
 To where the Alps, ascending white in air,
 Toy with the Sun, and glitter from afar.

Ev'n now I sigh at hoary Chartreuse' doom
 Weeping beneath his chill of mountain gloom.
 Where now is fled that Power whose frown severe
 Tam'd "sober Reason" till she crouch'd in fear ?
 That breath'd a death-like peace these woods around
 Broke only by th' unvaried torrent's sound,
 Or prayer-bell by the dull cicada drown'd.
 The cloister startles at the gleam of arms,
 And Blasphemy the shuddering sane alarms ;

† There are few people whom it may be necessary to inform, that the sides of many
 of the post-roads in France are planted with a row of trees.

Nod the cloud-piercing pines their troubl'd heads,
 Spires, rocks, and lawns, a browner night o'erspreads.
 Strong terror checks the female peasant's sighs,
 And start th' astonish'd shades at female eyes.
 The thundering tube the aged angler hears,
 And swells the groaning torrent with his tears.
 From Bruno's forest screams the frightened jay,
 And slow th' insulted eagle wheels away.
 The crofs with hideous laughter Demons mock,
 By *angels planted on the aëreal rock.
 The "parting Genius" sighs with hollow breath
 Along the mystic streams of †Life and Death.
 Swelling the outcry dull, that long resounds
 Portentous, thro' her old woods' trackless bounds,
 Deepening her echoing torrents' awful peal
 And bidding paler shades her form conceal,

* Alluding to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of the Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible.

† Names of rivers at the Chartreuse.

C

*Vallombre,

*Vallombre, mid her falling fanes, deplores,
 For ever broke, the sabbath of her bow'rs.
 More pleas'd, my foot the hidden margin roves
 Of Como bosom'd deep in chesnut groves.
 No meadows thrown between, the giddy steeps
 Tower, bare or sylvan, from the narrow deeps.
 To towns, whose shades of no rude sound complain,
 To ringing team unknown and grating wane,
 To flat-roof'd towns, that touch the water's bound,
 Or lurk in woody sunless glens profound,
 Or from the bending rocks obtrusive cling,
 And o'er the whiten'd wave their shadows fling ;
 Wild round the steeps the little †pathway twines,
 And Silence loves it's purple roof of vines.

* Name of one of the vallies of the Chartreuse.

† If any of my readers should ever visit the Lake of Como, I recommend it to him to take a stroll along this charming little pathway : he must chuse the evening, as it is on the western side of the Lake. We pursued it from the foot of the water to it's head : it is once interrupted by a ferry.

The

The viewless lingerer hence, at evening, sees
From rock-hewn steps the sail between the trees ;
Or marks, mid opening cliffs, fair dark-ey'd maids
Tend the small harvest of their garden glades,
Or, led by distant warbling notes, surveys,
With hollow ringing ears and darkening gaze,
Binding the charmed soul in powerless trance,
Lip-dewning Song and ringlet-tossing Dance,
Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illume
The bosom'd cabin's lyre-enliven'd gloom ;
Or stops the solemn mountain-shades to view
Stretch, o'er their pictur'd mirror, broad and blue,
Tracking the yellow sun from steep to steep,
As up th' opposing hills, with tortoise foot, they creep.
Here half a village shines, in gold array'd
Bright as the moon, half hides itself in shade.
From the dark sylvan roofs the restless spire
Inconstant glancing, mounts like springing fire.

There, all unshaded, blazing forests throw
Rich golden verdure on the waves below.

Slow glides the sail along th' illumin'd shore,
And steals into the shade the lazy oar.

Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,
And amourous music on the water dies.

Heedless how Pliny, musing here, survey'd
Old Roman boats and figures thro' the shade,
Pale Passion, overpower'd, retires and woos
The thicket, where th' unlisten'd stock-dove coos.

How blest'd, delicious Scene! the eye that greets
Thy open beauties, or thy lone retreats ;
Th' unweary'd sweep of wood thy cliffs that scales,
The never-ending waters of thy vales ;
The cots, those dim religious groves enbow'r,
Or, under rocks that from the water tow'r
Infinuated, sprinkling all the shore,
Each with his household boat beside the door,

Whose

Whose flaccid sails in forms fantastic droop,
Bright'ning the gloom where thick the forests stoop ;
—Thy torrents shooting from the clear-blue sky,
Thy towns, like swallows' nests that cleave on high ;
That glimmer hoar in eve's last light, descry'd
Dim from the twilight water's shaggy side,
Whence lutes and voices down th' enchanted woods
Steal, and compose the oar-forgotten floods,
While Evening's solemn bird melodious weeps,
Heard, by star-spotted bays, beneath the steepes ;
—Thy lake, mid smoking woods, that blue and grey
Gleams, streak'd or dappled, hid from morning's ray
Slow-travelling down the western hills, to fold
It's green-ting'd margin in a blaze of gold ;
From thickly-glittering spires the matin-bell
Calling the woodman from his desert cell,
A summons to the sound of oars, that pass,
Spotting the steaming deeps, to early mass ;

Slow

Slow swells the service o'er the water born,
While fill each pause the ringing woods of morn.

Farewel ! those forms that, in thy noon-tide shade,
Rest, near their little plots of wheaten glade ;
Those stedfast eyes, that beating breasts inspire
To throw the “sultry ray” of young Desire ;
Those lips, whose tides of fragrance come, and go,
Accordant to the cheek’s unquiet glow ;
Those shadowy breasts in love’s soft light array’d,
And rising, by the moon of passion sway’d.

—Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams,
Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams ;
While Slavery, forcing the funk mind to dwell
On joys that might disgrace the captive’s cell,
Her shameless timbrel shakes along thy marge,
And winds between thine isles the vocal barge.

Yet, arts are thine that rock th’ unsleeping heart,
And smiles to Solitude and Want impart.

I lov'd, mid thy most desert woods astray,
 With pensive step to measure my slow way,*
 By lonely, silent cottage-doors to roam,
 The far-off peasant's day-deserted home ;
 Once did I pierce to where a cabin stood,
 The red-breast peace had bury'd it in wood,
 There, by the door a hoary-headed fire
 Touch'd with his wither'd hand an aged lyre ;
 Beneath an old-grey oak as violets lie,
 Stretch'd at his feet with stedfast, upward eye,
 His children's children join'd the holy sound,
 —A hermit with his family around.

Hence shall we seek where fair Locarno smiles
 Embower'd in walnut slopes and citron isles,
 Or charms that smile on Tusa's evening stream,
 While mid towers and woods her †waters gleam ;

* Solo, e pensoso i più deserti campi

Vò misurando à passi tardi, e lenti. Petrarch.

† The river along whose banks you descend in crossing the Alps by the Sempion pass. From the striking contrast of it's features, this pass I should imagine to be the most interesting among the Alps.

From the bright wave, in solemn gloom, retire
 The dull-red steeps, and darkening still, aspire,
 To where afar rich orange lustres glow
 Round undistinguish'd clouds, and rocks, and snow ;
 Or, led where Viamala's chasms confine
 Th' indignant waters of the infant Rhine,
 Bend o'er th' abyss ?—the else impervious gloom
 His burning eyes with fearful !ight illume.
 The Grison gypsey here her tent has plac'd,
 Sole human tenant of the piny waste ;
 Her tawny skin, dark eyes, and glossy locks,
 Bend o'er the smoke that curls beneath the rocks.

—The mind condemn'd, without reprieve, to go
 O'er life's long deserts with it's charge of woe,
 With sad congratulation joins the train,
 Where beasts and men together o'er the plain
 Move on,—a mighty caravan of pain ;

Hope, strength, and courage, social suffering brings,
Freshening the waste of sand with shades and springs.

—She solitary through the desert drear
Spontaneous wanders, hand in hand with Fear.

A giant moan along the forest swells
Protracted, and the twilight storm foretells,
And, ruining from the cliffs their deafening load
Tumbles, the wildering Thunder slips abroad ;
On the high summits Darkness comes and goes,
Hiding their fiery clouds, their rocks, and snows ;
The torrent, travers'd by the lustre broad,
Starts like a horse beside the flashing road ;
In the roof'd *bridge, at that despairing hour,
She seeks a shelter from the battering show'r.

—Fierce comes the river down ; the crashing wood
Gives way, and half it's pines torment the flood ;

* Most of the bridges among the Alps are of wood and covered : these bridges have a heavy appearance, and rather injure the effect of the scenery in some places.

*Fearful, beneath, the Water-spirits call,
And the bridge vibrates, tottering to its fall.

—Heavy, and dull, and cloudy is the night,
No star supplies the comfort of it's light,
Glimmer the dim-lit Alps, dilated, round,
And one sole light shifts in the vale profound ;
While, opposite, the waning moon hangs still,
And red, above her melancholy hill.

By the deep quiet gloom appall'd, she sighs,
Stoops her sick head, and shuts her weary eyes.

—Breaking th' ascending roar of desert floods,
And insect buzz, that stuns the fultry woods,
She hears, upon the mountain forest's brow,
The death-dog, howling loud and long, below ;
On viewless fingers counts the valley-clock,
Followed by drowsy crow of midnight cock.

* “ Red came the river down, and loud, and oft
“ The angry Spirit of the water shriek'd.” HOME'S DOUGLAS.

—Bursts from the troubl'd Larch's giant boughs
 The pie, and chattering breaks the night's repose.
 Low barks the fox ; by Havoc rouz'd the bear,
 Quits, growling, the white bones that strew his lair ;
 The dry leaves stir as with the serpent's walk,
 And, far beneath, Banditti voices talk ;
 Behind her hill the Moon, all crimson, rides,
 And his red eyes the slinking Water hides ;
 Then all is hush'd ; the bushes rustle near,
 And with strange tinglings sings her fainting ear.

—Vex'd by the darkness, from the piny gulf
 Ascending, nearer howls the famish'd wolf,
 While thro' the stillness scatters wild dismay,
 Her babe's small cry, that leads him to his prey.

Now, passing Ursen's open vale serene,
 Her quiet streams, and hills of downy green,
 Plunge with the Russ embrown'd by Terror's breath,
 Where danger roofs the narrow walks of death ;

By floods, that, thundering from their dizzy height,
 Swell more gigantic on the stedfast fight ;
 Black drizzling craggs, that beaten by the din,
 Vibrate, as if a voice complain'd within ;
 Bare steeps, where Desolation stalks, afraid,
 Unstedfast, by a blasted yew upstay'd ;
 By *cells whose image, trembling as he prays,
 Awe-struck, the kneeling peasant scarce surveys ;
 Loose-hanging rocks the Day's blest'd eye that hide,
 And †crosses rear'd to Death on every side,
 Which with cold kiss Devotion planted near,
 And, bending, water'd with the human tear,
 Soon fading "silent" from her upward eye,
 Unmov'd with each rude form of Danger nigh,

* The Catholic religion prevails here, these cells are, as is well known, very common in the Catholic countries, planted, like the Roman tombs, along the road side.

† Crosses commemorative of the deaths of travellers by the fall of snow and other accidents very common along this dreadful road.

Fix'd on the anchor left by him who saves
 Alike in whelming snows and roaring waves.

On as we move, a softer prospect opes,
 Calm huts, and lawns between, and sylvan slopes.
 While mists, suspended on th' expiring gale,
 Moveless o'er-hang the deep secluded vale,
 The beams of evening, slipping soft between,
 Light up of tranquil joy a sober scene;
 Winding it's dark-green wood and emerald glade,
 The still vale lengthens underneath the shade ;
 While in soft gloom the scattering bowers recede,
 Green dewy lights adorn the freshen'd mead,
 Where solitary forms illumin'd stray
 Turning with quiet touch the valley's hay,
 On the low * brown wood-huts delighted sleep
 Along the brighten'd gloom reposing deep.

* The houses in the more retired Swiss valleys are all built of wood.

While

While pastoral pipes and streams the landscape lull,
And bells of passing mules that tinkle dull,
In solemn shapes before th' admiring eye
Dilated hang the misty pines on high,
Huge convent domes with pinnacles and tow'rs,
And antique castles seen thro' drizzling show'rs.

From such romantic dreams my soul awake,
Lo ! Fear looks silent down on Uri's lake,
By whose unpathway'd margin still and dread
Was never heard the plodding peasant's tread.

Tower like a wall the naked rocks, or reach
Far o'er the secret water dark with beach,
More high, to where creation seems to end,
Shade above shade the desert pines ascend,
And still, below, where mid the savage scene
Peeps out a little speck of smiling green,
There with his infants man undaunted creeps
And hangs his small wood-hut upon the steeps.

A gar-

A garden-plot the desert air perfumes,
Mid the dark pines a little orchard blooms,
A zig-zag path from the domestic skiff
Threading the painful cragg surmounts the cliff.

—Before those hermit doors, that never know
The face of traveller passing to and fro,
No peasant leans upon his pole, to tell
For whom at morning toll'd the funeral bell,
Their watch-dog ne'er his angry bark forgoes,
Touch'd by the beggar's moan of human woes,
The grassy seat beneath their casement shade
The pilgrim's wistful eye hath never stay'd.

—There, did the iron Genius not disdain
The gentle Power that haunts the myrtle plain,
There might the love-sick maiden sit, and chide
Th' insuperable rocks and severing tide,
There watch at eve her lover's sun-gilt sail
Approaching, and upbraid the tardy gale,

There

There list at midnight till is heard no more,
 Below, the echo of his parting oar,
 There hang in fear, when growls the frozen stream,
 To guide his dangerous tread the taper's gleam.

Mid stormy vapours ever driving by,
 Where ospreys, cormorants, and herons cry,
 Where hardly giv'n the hopeless waste to chear,
 Deny'd the bread of life the foodful ear,
 Dwindles the pear on autumn's latest spray,
 And apple sickens pale in summer's ray,
 Ev'n here Content has fix'd her smiling reign
 With Independance child of high Disdain.
 Exulting mid the winter of the skies,
 Shy as the jealous chamois, Freedom flies,
 And often grasps her fword, and often eyes,
 Her crest a bough of Winter's bleakest pine,
 Strange " weeds" and alpine plants her helm entwine,

And

And wildly-pausing oft she hangs aghast,
 While thrills the "Spartan fife" between the blast.

'Tis storm ; and hid in mist from hour to hour
 All day the floods a deeper murmur pour,
 And mournful sounds, as of a Spirit lost,
 Pipe wild along the hollow-blustering coast,
 'Till the Sun walking on his western field
 Shakes from behind the clouds his flashing shield.
 Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
 Glances the fire-clad eagle's wheeling form ;
 Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine
 The wood-crown'd cliffs that o'er the lake recline ;
 Wide o'er the Alps a hundred streams unfold.
 At once to pillars turn'd that flame with gold ;
 Behind his sail the peasant strives to shun
 The west that burns like one dilated sun,

E

Where

Where in a mighty crucible expire
 The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire.*
 But lo ! the boatman, over-aw'd, before
 The pictur'd fane of Tell suspends his oar ;
 Confused the Marathonian tale appears,
 While burn in his full eyes the glorious tears.
 And who but feels a power of strong controul,
 Felt only there, oppress his labouring soul,
 Who walks, where honour'd men of ancient days
 Have wrought with god-like arm the deeds of praise ?

* I had once given to these sketches the title of Picturesque ; but the Alps are insulted in applying to them that term. Whoever, in attempting to describe their sublime features, should confine himself to the cold rules of painting would give his reader but a very imperfect idea of those emotions which they have the irresistible power of communicating to the most impassive imaginations. The fact is, that controuling influence, which distinguishes the Alps from all other scenery, is derived from images which disdain the pencil. Had I wished to make a picture of this scene I had thrown much less light into it. But I consulted nature and my feelings. The ideas excited by the stormy sunset I am here describing owed their sublimity to that deluge of light, or rather of fire, in which nature had wrapped the immense forms around me ; any intrusion of shade, by destroying the unity of the impression, had necessarily diminished it's grandeur.

Say, who, by thinking on Canadian hills,
 Or wild Aosta lull'd by Alpine rills,
 On Zutphen's plain ; or where with soften'd gaze
 The old grey stones the plaied chief surveys,
 Can gues the high reslove, the cherish'd pain
 Of him whom passion rivets to the plain,
 Where breath'd the gale that caught Wolfe's happiest sigh,
 And the last sun-beam fell on Bayard's eye,
 Where bleeding Sydney from the cup retir'd,
 And glad Dundee in " faint huzzas" expir'd.

But now with other soul I stand alone
 Sublime upon this far-surveying cone,
 And watch from * pike to pike amid the sky
 Small as a bird the chamois-chaser fly.
 'Tis his with fearless step at large to roam
 Thro' wastes, of Spirits wing'd the solemn home,

* Pike is a word very commonly used in the north of England, to signify a high mountain of the conic form, as Langdale pike, &c.

* Thro' vacant worlds where Nature never gave
 A brook to murmur or a bough to wave,
 Which unsubstantial Phantoms sacred keep ;
 Thro' worlds where Life and Sound, and Motion sleep,
 Where Silence still her death-like reign extends,
 Save when the startling cliff unfrequent rends :
 In the deep snow the mighty ruin drown'd,
 Mocks the dull ear of Time with deaf abortive sound ;
 — To mark a planet's pomp and steady light
 In the least star of scarce-appearing night,
 And neighbouring moon, that coasts the vast profound,
 Wheel pale and silent her diminish'd round,
 While far and wide the icy summits blaze
 Rejoicing in the glory of her rays ;
 The star of noon that glitters small and bright,
 Shorn of his beams, insufferably white,

* For most of the images in the next sixteen verses I am indebted to M. Raymond's interesting observations annexed to his translation of Coxe's Tour in Switzerland.

And

And flying fleet behind his orb to view
Th' interminable sea of sable blue.

—Of cloudless suns no more ye frost-built spires
Refract in rainbow hues the restless fires !
Ye dewy mists the arid rocks o'er-spread
Whose slippery face derides his deathful tread !

—To wet the peak's impracticable sides
He opens of his feet the sanguine tides,
Weak and more weak the issuing current eyes
Lapp'd by the panting tongue of thirsty skies.*

—At once bewildering mists around him close,
And cold and hunger are his least of woes ;

The Demon of the snow with angry roar
Descending, shuts for aye his prison door.
Craz'd by the strength of hope at morn he eyes
As sent from heav'n the raven of the skies,

* The rays of the sun drying the rocks frequently produce on their surface a dust so subtle and slippery, that the wretched chamois-chasers are obliged to bleed themselves in the legs and feet in order to secure a footing.

Then

Then with despair's whole weight his spirits sink,
 No bread to feed him, and the snow his drink,
 While ere his eyes can close upon the day,
 The eagle of the Alps o'ershades his prey.

—Meanwhile his wife and child with cruel hope
 All night the door at every moment ope ;
 Haply that child in fearful doubt may gaze,
 Passing his father's bones in future days,
 Start at the reliques of that very thigh,
 On which so oft he prattled when a boy.

Hence shall we turn where, heard with fear afar,
 Thunders thro' echoing pines the headlong Aar ?
 Or rather stay to taste the mild delights
 Of pensive *Underwalden's pastoral heights ?

—Is there who mid these awful wilds has seen
 The native Genii walk the mountain green ?

* The people of this Canton are supposed to be of a more melancholy disposition than the other inhabitants of the Alps: this, if true, may proceed from their living more secluded.

Or

Or heard, while other worlds their charms reveal,
 Soft music from th' aëreal summit steal ?
 While o'er the desert, answering every close,
 Rich steam of sweetest perfume comes and goes.

—And sure there is a secret Power that reigns
 Here, where no trace of man the spot profanes,
 Nought but the herds that pasturing upward creep,
 Hung dim-discover'd from the dangerous steep,
 *Or summer hamlet, flat and bare, on high
 Suspended, mid the quiet of the sky.
 How still ! no irreligious sound or sight
 Rouzes the soul from her severe delight.
 An idle voice the sabbath region fills
 Of Deep that calls to Deep across the hills,
 Broke only by the melancholy sound
 Of drowsy bells for ever tinkling round ;

* These summer hamlets are most probably (as I have seen observed by a critic in the Gentleman's Magazine) what Virgil alludes to in the expression "Castella in tumulis."

Faint wail of eagle melting into blue
 Beneath the cliffs, and pine-woods steady sugh* ;
 The solitary heifer's deepen'd low ;
 Or rumbling heard remote of falling snow.
 Save that, the stranger seen below, the boy
 Shouts from the echoing hills with savage joy.

When warm from myrtle bays and tranquil seas,
 Comes on, to whisper hope, the †ernal breeze,
 When hums the mountain bee in May's glad ear,
 And emerald isles to spot the heights appear,
 When shouts and lowing herds the valley fill,
 And louder torrents stun the noon-tide hill,
 When fragrant scents beneath th' enchanted tread
 Spring up; his little all around him spread,
 The pastoral Swiss begins the cliffs to scale
 To silence leaving the deserted vale,

* Sugh, a Scotch word expressive of the sound of the wind through the trees.

† This wind, which announces the spring to the Swiss, is called in their language FOEN; and is according to M. Raymond the Syroco of the Italians.

Up the green mountain tracking Summer's feet,
Each twilight earlier call'd the Sun to meet,
With earlier smile the ray of morn to view
Fall on his shifting hut that gleams mid smoking dew ;
Bles'd with his herds, as in the patriarch's age,
The summer long to feed from stage to stage ;
O'er azure pikes serene and still, they go,
And hear the rattling thunder far below ;
Or lost at eve in sudden mist the day
Attend, or dare with minute-steps their way ;
Hang from the rocks that tremble o'er the steep,
And tempt the icy valley yawning deep,
O'er-walk the chasmy torrent's foam-lit bed,
Rock'd on the dizzy larch's narrow tread,
Whence Danger leans, and pointing ghastly, joys
To mock the mind with "desperation's toys" ;
Or steal beneath loose mountains, half deterr'd,
That sigh and shudder to the lowing herd.

—I see him, up the midway cliff he creeps
To where a scanty knot of verdure peeps,
Thence down the steep a pile of grass he throws
The fodder of his herds in winter snows.
Far different life to what tradition hoar
Transmits of days more bless'd in times of yore.*
Then Summer lengthen'd out his season bland,
And with rock-honey flow'd the happy land.
Continual fountains welling chear'd the waste,
And plants were wholesome, now of deadly taste.
Nor Winter yet his frozen stores had pil'd
Usurping where the fairest herbage smil'd ;

* This tradition of the golden age of the Alps, as M. Raymond observes, is highly interesting, interesting not less to the philosopher than to the poet. Here I cannot help remarking, that the superstitions of the Alps appear to be far from possessing that poetical character which so eminently distinguishes those of Scotland and the other mountainous northern countries. The Devil with his horns, &c. seems to be in their idea, the principal agent that brings about the sublime natural revolutions that take place daily before their eyes.

Nor

Nor Hunger forc'd the herds from pastures bare
For scanty food the treacherous cliffs to dare.

Then the milk-thistle bad those herds demand
Three times a day the pail and welcome hand.
But human vices have provok'd the rod
Of angry Nature to avenge her God.

Thus does the father to his sons relate,
On the lone mountain top, their chang'd estate.

Still, Nature, ever just, to him imparts
Joys only given to uncorrupted hearts.

—'Tis morn: with gold the verdant mountain glows,
More high, the snowy peaks with hues of rose.

Far stretch'd beneath the many-tinted hills
A mighty waste of mist the valley fills,
A solemn sea! whose vales and mountains round
Stand motionless, to awful silence bound.
A gulf of gloomy blue, that opens wide
And bottomless, divides the midway tide.

Like leaning masts of stranded ships appear
The pines that near the coast their summits rear ;
Of cabins, woods, and lawns a pleasant shore
Bounds calm and clear the chaos still and hoar ;
Loud thro' that midway gulf ascending, sound
Unnumber'd streams with hollow roar profound.
Mounts thro' the nearer mist the chaunt of birds,
And talking voices, and the low of herds,
The bark of dogs, the drowsy tinkling bell,
And wild-wood mountain lutes of saddest swell.
Think not, suspended from the cliff on high
He looks below with undelighted eye.
—No vulgar joy is his, at even tide
Stretch'd on the scented mountain's purple side.
For as the pleasures of his simple day
Beyond his native valley hardly stray,
Nought round it's darling precincts can he find
But brings some past enjoyment to his mind,

While

While Hope that ceasethless leans on Pleasure's urn
Binds her wild wreathes, and whispers his return.

Once Man entirely free, alone and wild,
Was bless'd as free—for he was Nature's child.
He, all superior but his God disdain'd,
Walk'd none restraining, and by none restrain'd,
Confess'd no law but what his reason taught,
Did all he wish'd, and wish'd but what he ought.
As Man in his primæval dower array'd
The image of his glorious fire display'd,
Ev'n so, by vestal Nature guarded, here
The traces of primæval Man appear.
The native dignity no forms debase,
The eye sublime, and fury lion-grace.
The slave of none, of beasts alone the lord,
He marches with his flute, his book, and sword,
Well taught by that to feel his rights, prepar'd
With this "the blessings he enjoys to guard."

And

And as on glorious ground he draws his breath,
 Where Freedom oft, with Victory and Death,
 Hath seen in grim array amid their Storms
 Mix'd with auxiliar Rocks, three * hundred Forms ;
 While twice ten thousand corfelets at the view
 Dropped loud at once, Oppression shriek'd, and flew.
 Oft as those sainted Rocks before him spread,
 An unknown power connects him with the dead.
 For images of other worlds are there,
 Awful the light, and holy is the air.
 Uncertain thro' his fierce uncultur'd soul
 Like lighted tempests troubled transports roll ;
 To viewles realms his Spirit towers amain,
 Beyond the senses and their little reign.

* Alluding to several battles which the Swiss in very small numbers have gained over their oppressors the house of Austria ; and in particular, to one fought at Næffels near Glarus, where three hundred and thirty men defeated an army of between fifteen and twenty thousand Austrians. Scattered over the valley are to be found eleven stones, with this inscription, 1388, the year the battle was fought, marking out as I was told upon the spot, the several places where the Austrians attempting to make a stand were repulsed anew.

And

And oft, when pass'd that solemn vision by,
He holds with God himself communion high,
When the dread peal of swelling torrents fills
The sky-roof'd temple of th' eternal hills,
And savage Nature humbly joins the rite,
While flash her upward eyes severe delight.
Or gazing from the mountain's silent brow
Bright stars of ice and azure worlds of snow,
Where needle peaks of granite shooting bare
Tremble in ever-varying tints of air,
Great joy by horror tam'd dilates his heart,
And the near heav'ns their own delights impart.
—When the Sun bids the gorgeous scene farewell,
Alps overlooking Alps their state upswell ;
Huge Pikes of Darkness nam'd, of * Fear and Storms
Lift, all serene, their still, illumin'd forms,

† As Schreck-Horn, the pike of terror. Wetter-Horn the pike of storms, &c. &c.

In sea-like reach of prospect round him spread,
 Ting'd like an angel's smile all rosy red.
 When downward to his winter hut he goes,
 Dear and more dear the lessening circle grows,
 That hut which from the hills his eyes employs
 So oft, the central point of all his joys.
 And as a swift by tender cares oppres'd
 Peeps often ere she dart into her nest,
 So to th' untrodden floor, where round him looks
 His father helpless as the babe he rocks,
 Oft he descends to nurse the brother pair,
 Till storm and driving ice blockade him there;
 There hears, protected by the woods behind,
 Secure, the chiding of the baffled wind,
 Hears Winter, calling all his Terrors round,
 Rush down the living rocks with whirlwind found.
 Thro' Nature's vale his homely pleasures glide
 Unstain'd by envy, discontent, and pride,

The bound of all his vanity to deck
 With one bright bell a favourite heifer's neck ;
 Content upon some simple annual feast,
 Remember'd half the year, and hop'd the rest,
 If dairy produce, from his inner hoard,
 Of thrice ten summers consecrate the board.

—Alas ! in every clime a flying ray
 Is all we have to chear our wintry way,
 Condemn'd, in mists and tempests ever rife,
 To pant slow up the endless Alp of life.

“ Here”, cried a swain, whose venerable head
 Bloom'd with the snow-drops of Man's narrow bed,
 Last night, while by his dying fire, as clos'd
 The day, in luxury my limbs repos'd,
 “ Here Penury oft from misery's mount will guide
 “ Ev'n to the summer door his icy tide,
 “ And here the avalanche of Death destroy
 “ The little cottage of domestic Joy.

“ But, ah ! th’ unwilling mind may more than trace
“ The general sorrows of the human race :
“ The churlish gales, that unremitting blow
“ Cold from necessity’s continual snow,
“ To us the gentle groups of bliss deny
“ That on the noon-day bank of leisure lie.
“ Yet more ; the tyrant Genius, still at strife
“ With all the tender Charities of life,
“ When close and closer they begin to strain,
“ No fond hand left to staunch th’ unclosing vein,
“ Tearing their bleeding ties leaves Age to groan
“ On his wet bed, abandon’d and alone.
“ For ever, fast as they of strength become
“ To pay the filial debt, for food to roam,
“ The father, forc’d by Powers that only deign
“ That solitary Man disturb their reign,
“ From his bare nest amid the storms of heaven
“ Drives, eagle-like, his sons as he was driven,

His

“ His last dread pleasure ! watches to the plain—

“ And never, eagle-like, beholds again.”

When the poor heart has all its joys resign'd,

Why does their sad remembrance cleave behind ?

Lo ! by the lazy Seine the exile roves,

Or where thick sails illume Batavia's groves ;

Soft o'er the waters mournful measures swell,

Unlocking bleeding Thought's “ memorial cell ;”

At once upon his heart Despair has fet

Her seal, the mortal tear his cheek has wet ;

Strong poison not a form of steel can brave

Bows his young hairs with sorrow to the grave*.

Gay lark of hope thy silent song resume !

Fair smiling lights the purpled hills illume !

* The effect of the famous air called in French Ranz des Vaches upon the Swiss troops removed from their native country is well known, as also the injunction of not playing it on pain of death, before the regiments of that nation, in the service of France and Holland.

Soft gales and dews of life's delicious morn,
 And thou, lost fragrance of the heart return !

* Soon flies the little joy to man allow'd,
 And tears before him travel like a cloud.

For come Diseases on, and Penury's rage,
 Labour, and Pain, and Grief, and joyless Age,
 And Conscience dogging close his bleeding way
 Cries out, and leads her Spectres to their prey,
 'Till Hope-deserted, long in vain his breath
 Implores the dreadful untried sleep of Death.

—Mid savage rocks and seas of snow that shine
 Between interminable tracts of pine,
 Round a lone fane the human Genii mourn,
 Where fierce the rays of woe collected burn.

—From viewless lamps a ghastly dimness falls,
 And ebbs uncertain on the troubled walls,

* Optima quæque dies, &c.

Dim

Dim dreadful faces thro' the gloom appear,
 Abortive Joy, and Hope that works in fear,
 While strives a secret Power to hush the croud,
 Pain's wild rebellious burst proclaims her rights aloud.

Oh give not me that eye of hard disdain
 That views undimm'd Einsiedlen's * wretched fane.

Mid muttering prayers all sounds of torment meet,
 Dire clap of hands, distracted chafe of feet,
 While loud and dull ascends the weeping cry,
 Surely in other thoughts contempt may die.

If the sad grave of human ignorance bear
 One flower of hope—Oh pass and leave it there.

—The tall Sun, tiptoe on an Alpine spire,
 Flings o'er the desert blood-red streams of fire.

At such an hour there are who love to stray,
 And meet the gladdening pilgrims on their way.

* This shrine is resorted to, from a hope of relief, by multitudes, from every corner of the Catholick world, labouring under mental or bodily afflictions.

—Now

—Now with joy's tearful kiss each other greet,
 Nor longer naked be your way-worn feet,
 For ye have reach'd at last that happy shore,
 Where the charm'd worm of pain shall gnaw no more.
 How gayly murmur and how sweetly taste
 The * fountains rear'd for you amid the waste !
 Yes I will see you when ye first behold
 Those turrets tipp'd by hope with morning gold,
 And watch, while on your brows the cross ye make,
 Round your pale eyes a wintry lustre wake.
 —Without one hope her written griefs to blot,
 Save in the land where all things are forgot,
 My heart, alive to transports long unknown,
 Half wishes your delusion were it's own.

* Rude fountains built and covered with sheds for the accomodation of the pilgrims, in their ascent of the mountain. Under these sheds the sentimental traveller and the philosopher may find interesting sources of meditation.

Last

Last let us turn to where Chamouny * shields,
 Bosom'd in gloomy woods, her golden fields,
 Five streams of ice amid her cots descend,
 And with wild flowers and blooming orchards blend,
 A scene more fair than what the Grecian feigns
 Of purple lights and ever vernal plains.
 Here lawns and shades by breezy rivulets fann'd,
 Here all the Seasons revel hand in hand.
 —Red stream the cottage lights ; the landscape fades,
 Erroneous wavering mid the twilight shades.
 Alone ascends that mountain nam'd of white †,
 That dallies with the Sun the summer night.
 Six thousand years amid his lonely bounds
 The voice of Ruin, day and night, resounds.
 Where Horror-led his sea of ice assails,
 Havoc and Chaos blast a thousand vales,

* This word is pronounced upon the spot Chàmouny, I have taken the liberty of reading it long thinking it more musical.

† It is only from the higher part of the valley of Chàmouny that Mont blanc is visible.

In waves, like two enormous serpents, wind
 And drag their length of deluge train behind.
 Between the pine's enormous boughs descry'd
 Serene he towers, in deepest purple dy'd ;
 Glad Day-light laughs upon his top of snow,
 Glitter the stars above, and all is black below.

At such an hour I heav'd the human sigh,
 When roar'd the fullen Arve in anger by,
 That not for thee, delicious vale ! unfold
 Thy reddening orchards, and thy fields of gold ;
 That thou, the * slave of slaves, art doom'd to pine,
 While no Italian arts their charms combine
 To teach the skirt of thy dark cloud to shine ;
 For thy poor babes that, hurrying from the door,
 With pale-blue hands, and eyes that fix'd implore,

* It is scarce necessary to observe that these lines were written before the emancipation of Savoy.

Dead muttering lips, and hair of hungry white,
Besiege the traveller whom they half affright.

—Yes, were it mine, the cottage meal to share
Forc'd from my native mountains bleak and bare ;
O'er * Anet's hopeless seas of marsh to stray,
Her shrill winds roaring round my lonely way ;
To scent the sweets of Piedmont's breathing rose,
And orange gale that o'er Lugano blows ;
In the wide range of many a weary round,
Still have my pilgrim feet unfailing found,
As despot courts their blaze of gems display,
Ev'n by the secret cottage far away
The lilly of domestic joy decay ;
While Freedom's farthest hamlets blessings share,
Found still beneath her smile, and only there.

Two ribbons red, orange and blue, and a small blue ribbon.

* A vast extent of marsh so called near the lake of Neuf chate.

The casement shade more luscious woodbine binds,
 And to the door a neater pathway winds,
 At early morn the careful housewife, led
 To cull her dinner from it's garden bed,
 Of weedless herbs a healthier prospect sees,
 While hum with busier joy her happy bees ;
 In brighter rows her table wealth aspires,
 And laugh with merrier blaze her evening fires ;
 Her infant's cheeks with fresher roses glow,
 And wilder graces sport around their brow ;
 By clearer taper lit a cleanlier board
 Receives at supper hour her tempting hoard ;
 The chamber hearth with fresher boughs is spread,
 And whiter is the hospitable bed.

—And thou ! fair favoured region ! which my soul
 Shall love, 'till Life has broke her golden bowl,

Till

Till Death's cold touch her cistern-wheel assail,
 And vain regret and vain desire shall fail ;
 Tho' now, where erst the grey-clad peasant stray'd,
 To break the quiet of the village shade
 Gleam war's * discordant habits thro' the trees,
 And the red banner mock the sullen breeze ;
 'Tho' now no more thy maids their voices suit
 To the low-warbled breath of twilight lute,
 And heard, the pausing village hum between,
 No solemn songstrefs lull the fading green,
 Scared by the fife, and rumbling drum's alarms,
 And the short thunder, and the flash of arms ;
 While, as Night bids the startling uproar die,
 Sole found, the † sourd renew'd his mournful cry :
 —Yet, hast thou found that Freedom spreads her pow'r
 Beyond the cottage hearth, the cottage door :

* This, as may be supposed, was written before France became the seat of war.

† An insect so called, which emits a short, melancholy cry, heard, at the close of the summer evenings, on the banks of the Loire.

All nature smiles ; and owns beneath her eyes
 Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies.
 Yes, as I roam'd where Loiret's * waters glide
 Thro' rustling aspens heard from side to side,
 When from october clouds a milder light
 Fell, where the blue flood rippled into white,
 Methought from every cot the watchful bird
 Crowed with ear-piercing power 'till then unheard ;

* The river Loiret, which has the honour of giving name to a department, rises out of the earth at a place, called La Source, a league and a half south-east of Orleans, and taking at once the character of a considerable stream, winds under a most delicious bank on its left, with a flat country of meadows, woods, and vineyards on its right, till it falls into the Loire about three or four leagues below Orleans. The hand of false taste has committed on its banks those outrages which the Abbé de Lille so pathetically deprecates in those charming verses descriptive of the Seine, visiting in secret the retreat of his friend Watelet. Much as the Loiret, in its short course, suffers from injudicious ornament, yet are there spots to be found upon its banks as soothing as meditation could wish for : the curious traveller may meet with some of them where it loses itself among the mills in the neighbourhood of the villa called La Fontaine. The walks of La Source, where it takes its rise, may, in the eyes of some people, derive an additional interest from the recollection that they were the retreat of Bolingbroke during his exile, and that here it was that his philosophical works were chiefly composed. The inscriptions, of which he speaks in one of his letters to Swift descriptive of this spot, are not, I believe, now extant. The gardens have been modelled within these twenty years according to a plan evidently not dictated by the taste of the friend of Pope.

Each clacking mill, that broke the murmuring streams,
 Rock'd the charm'd thought in more delightful dreams ;
 Chasing those long long dreams the falling leaf
 Awoke a fainter pang of moral grief ;
 The measured echo of the distant flail
 Winded in sweeter cadence down the vale ;
 A more majestic tide the * water roll'd,
 And glowed the sun-gilt groves in richer gold :
 —Tho' Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise
 Red on his hills his beacon's comet blaze ;
 Bid from on high his lonely cannon sound,
 And on ten thousand hearths his shout rebound ;
 His larum-bell from village-tow'r to tow'r
 Swing on th' astounded ear it's dull undying roar :
 Yet, yet rejoice, tho' Pride's perverted ire
 Rouze Hell's own aid, and wrap thy hills in fire.

* The duties upon many parts of the French rivers were so exorbitant that the poorer people, deprived of the benefit of water carriage, were obliged to transport their goods by land.

Lo !

Lo ! from th' innocuous flames, a lovely birth !
 With it's own Virtues springs another earth :
 Nature, as in her prime, her virgin reign
 Begins, and Love and Truth compose her train ;
 With pulseless hand, and fix'd unwearied gaze,
 Unbreathing Justice her still beam surveys :
 No more, along thy vales and viny groves,
 Whole hamlets disappearing as he moves,
 With cheeks o'erspread by smiles of baleful glow,
 On his pale horse shall fell Consumption go.

Oh give, great God, to Freedom's waves to ride
 Sublime o'er Conquest, Avarice, and Pride,
 To break, the vales where Death with Famine scow'rs,
 And dark Oppression builds her thick-ribb'd tow'rs ;
 Where Machination her fell soul resigns,
 Fled panting to the centre of her mines ;
 Where Persecution decks with ghastly smiles
 Her bed, his mountains mad Ambition piles ;

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Where

Where Discord stalks dilating, every hour,
 And crouching fearful at the feet of Pow'r,
 Like Lightnings eager for th' almighty word,
 Look up for sign of havoc, Fire, and Sword *;
 —Give them, beneath their breast while Gladness springs,
 To brood the nations o'er with Nile-like wings ;
 And grant that every sceptred child of clay,
 Who cries, presumptuous, " here their tides shall stay,"
 Swept in their anger from th' affrighted shore,
 With all his creatures sink—to rise no more.

To night, my friend, within this humble cot
 Be the dead load of mortal ills forgot,
 Renewing, when the rosy summits glow
 At morn, our various journey, sad and flow.

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* —And, at his heels,
 Leash'd in like hounds, should Famine, Sword, and Fire,
 Crouch for employment.

T H E E N D.

Just published, by the same Author,

A N

E V E N I N G W A L K.

An EPISTLE,

IN VERSE.

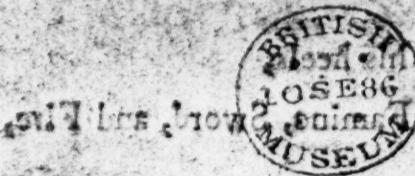
ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY

FROM THE

L A K E S

OF THE

N O R T H O F E N G L A N D.



THE END.